



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

CTEC'S Purpose: To undertake projects and make recommendations concerning the protection or use of natural resources, including water resources and air quality, located within or directly affecting Chatham Township.

The Chatham Township Environmental Commission's goal is to provide a responsible environmental viewpoint to Township committees and boards and to undertake projects with a strong educational component in order to inform officials and residents about constructive actions that can be taken to preserve the environment.

CTEC is 52 years old

The Chatham Township Environmental Commission was formed in 1968 (Ord. No. 27-68), the same year New Jersey passed legislation allowing towns to do so, and the same year the Rolling Knolls landfill was closed. The EC's first major action was to create a Natural Resources Inventory in 1974 which the EC has since updated twice. In 1974 former mayor Erv Hoag was on the Township Committee, Sam Averett was chair of the EC, and EC members included Sylvia Boyer, Arthur Heyl, Elise Davis and Joan Farrell.

Commissioners in 2020

Peter Coviello, Cara Feeser, Maureen Kelly, Amy Mason, Dan Miller, Matt Palmer, Doris Rhee, Jessica Romeo, Dorothea Stillinger (EC Chair), Don Travisano (Planning Board liaison), Celeste Fondaco (Township Committee liaison).

Associate Members: Lisa McHugh, Mahasweta Dhawan

Meetings. The Commission met 10 times during 2020. Average attendance was 7 members.

Green Team

- The Commission also serves as the Township Green Team. The Green Team is chaired by Maureen Kelly.
- The Green Team achieved 200 points for Sustainable Jersey certification due to the efforts of Steve Carroll and Maureen Kelly, which was more than the 150 required for Bronze certification. Bronze certification was awarded to Chatham Township in 2018, good for three years through 2021. Chatham Township has achieved Bronze SJ certification each cycle since the program was founded in 2009.

Projects

- Northern New Jersey Sustainable Municipal Alliance, chaired by Jessica Romeo, includes Chatham Township, Chatham Borough and Madison. The Alliance cooperated on an ordinance to ban single-use plastic bags. The ordinance was passed in all three towns in 2019 influencing the statewide ban in 2020. The partnership with the Chatham Borough and Madison Environmental Commissions involves working together on things like the Electric Vehicle Forum, community education programs such as composting, planting with native plants, wildlife education, coordinating for the multi town yard sale and virtual clean up days.

- Seedling Give-A-Way in April. In a project led by Cara Feeser and implemented by Lisa McHugh and Maureen Kelly, 500 tree seedlings were distributed free to Chatham Township residents as part of a joint effort between Chatham Township, New Jersey Forest Service, New Jersey Soil Conservation Districts, Sustainable Jersey and the Arbor Day Foundation.

Last year the CTEC received 500 trees for the annual seedling giveaway. All towns received a reduced amount given the uncertainty of the program due to COVID. Despite COVID, it was one of our best and well run giveaways. We modified our approach due to COVID guidelines and in a two-hour period we distributed trees to 85 cars that lined up at the municipal building. This year will be going back to distributing 1000 trees like all years prior.

We did not pay for any last year, nor are there any costs this year.

- Energy Aggregation. The Energy Subcommittee chaired by Amy Mason investigated the benefits to Chatham Township of energy aggregation and submitted a model ordinance to the Chatham Township Committee. An agreement would save town residents money and advance the use of renewables.

- Monarch Butterfly project. An information table headed by Jessica Romeo at a Farmer's Market displayed information and gave away free peat pots and milkweed seeds. Well attended.

- Pesticide-free lawn care project. With Environmental Commission leadership (Cara Feeser) Chatham Township implemented an organic pesticide-free maintenance program on all its municipal playing fields and recreation areas.

- CTEC Facebook page maintained on-going (Cara Feeser).

- Commission website updated (Cara Feeser).
- Green Village Pond trail - high usage this year. EC members and volunteers improved the footpath around and over wet areas.
- Maintained liaison with Open Space Committee (Cara Feeser).
- Updated the conservation easement inventory and map (Dot Stillinger). Chatham Township holds about 50 conservation easements and there are at least 20 NJDEP conservation easements in the Township. The map is online in the NRI.
- Canceled. Sustainability Fair in the fall in partnership with the Chatham Borough Environmental Commission was canceled in 2020. Booths, exhibits, handouts in all previous years.
- Canceled. Annual Open Space Workday. Canceled in 2020.

Advocacy

- Development applications. Members attended Planning Board and Board of Adjustment meetings and commented on applications (Maureen Kelly, Dot Stillinger).
- Letters were sent to the Planning Board, Board of Adjustment and various legislators and state agencies.

Training and Meetings

- Several Commissioners attended conferences and workshops sponsored by the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) and other environmental organizations.

Plans for 2021

- Conduct a Tree Seedling Give-A-Way in April.
- Conduct a Free Sale and regional yard sale in April.
- Promote an Energy Aggregation ordinance.
- Improve the Green Village Pond trail, which has great potential for a nature trail and also gives easy access to the Kirby meadow, a great place for birdwatching.
- Co-sponsor the Sustainability Fair to be held in September.
- Work on projects and press for adoption of ordinances that will result in Sustainable Jersey points.
- Obtain a state grant for the installation of electric vehicle chargers at the municipal building near the Senior Center, at Nash Field and at Shunpike Field.
- Press for adoption of a pesticide free ordinance for all municipal lawns, fields, grounds. Work on organic pesticide-free lawn and field maintenance programs.
- Produce educational events for residents.
- Monitor environmental activities on the local and state level (e.g. Pilgrim pipeline, offshore drilling), comment as necessary.
- Update the conservation easement inventory as more conservation easements are acquired.
- Investigate potential grants for projects.
- Attend conferences and training events.
- Review development and wetland applications, comment as necessary.
- Attend Planning Board, Board of Adjustment, Township Committee meetings as needed.
- Monitor EPA cleanup at Rolling Knolls. Current plans call for limited removal and capping of contamination with a fence and No Trespassing signs around most of the property.

Acknowledgements

- Grateful thanks to the Chatham Township Committee for supporting the Green Team by passing all requested resolutions and ordinances.
- Grateful thanks to **Chatham Disposal Inc, ShopRite of Chatham, and Chatham Township DPW** for donations of goods and services and providing assistance in all past Annual Workdays.
- Grateful thanks to ANJEC for responding to requests for information and documents.
- And most grateful thanks to the Commissioners for their faithful attendance at meetings and their hard work on projects.

===== dks February 2021